

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Fact Sheet

CSEC affects communities at worldwide, national and local levels. CSEC is defined as sexual abuse of a minor for economic gain. It involves physical abuse, pornography, prostitution and the smuggling of children for unlawful purposes.

CSEC is a form of human trafficking. Human trafficking is a worldwide, billion-dollar-a-year industry. According to the State Office of the Attorney General, human trafficking is the world's second most profitable criminal enterprise, with drug trafficking holding the topmost rank.

CSEC is a rampant and fast-growing problem: Three of the nation's 13 high-intensity child prostitution areas as identified by the FBI are located in California: Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego metropolitan areas.

VICTIMS

ALL CHILDREN (girls, boys, transgendered youth) from any background can be targeted and exploited. Average age of entry into prostitution is 13 years old

VICTIMIZATION - HOW IT HAPPENS

- · Victims are often hidden from view, often going unnoticed
- Pimps and other exploiters scout bus stations, arcades, malls and social networking websites, honing in on girls/boys who appear to be runaways without money or skills, or who may be experiencing trouble at home
- They befriend the youth by showing them affection; buying them clothes, meals, jewelry, beauty/grooming (i.e., manicures) and/or offering shelter in exchange for sex
- False promises of a "better life" are an important recruitment tool. Reality: All money is turned over to the pimp/trafficker and children are exploited for monetary gain and sexual gratification of the exploiters and their clients
- The pimp/trafficker creates a seemingly loving and caring relationship with the child in order to establish trust and lovalty.
- Pimps and exploiters eventually (as little as 2 weeks) use the child's emotional and financial dependency to coerce them into selling sex for money
- The manipulation tactics used by the exploiter ensures that the child will remain loyal to him/her despite acts of violence and severe victimization against the child
- Children are threatened or may be assaulted to guarantee obedience and prevent their escape

PERPETRATORS

(EXPLOITERS, TRAFFICKERS OR PIMPS)

- · Predators who seek out vulnerable victims
- Can be anyone, including family members, boyfriends or other trusted adults
- Although exploiters often target children outside of their family, a family member may also prostitute a child

CSEC INDICATORS - WHO IS AT RISK?

- · Homelessness/runaway youth
- Children with sexual abuse histories
- Kids with history of violations (i.e., truancy, curfew violations or involvement with juvenile justice system)
- There is a presence of an older "boyfriend" or adult who is controlling in the youth's life
- Youth has tattoos, brandings or markings
- Signs of violence (i.e., cuts, bruises or burns on child's body)

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

Abused and exploited by the pimp, the child is then left traumatized, alone and without support. In addition, the victim may experience a range of emotional or psychological distress, including:

- Trauma (complex trauma/trauma-bonding)
- Depression
- Isolation
- Thoughts of suicide or self-destructive behavior
- Guilt
- Anxiety
- · Anger control issues
- Difficulty forming positive relations with others
- · Difficulty managing moods
- Attention deficit/impulse control issues

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CSEC Fact Sheet (cont'd) (As of March 13, 2014)

LA County Board of Supervisors Take Action

On September 24, 2013, a Board motion introduced by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Don Knabe was approved to establish a countywide, multi-agency response model to combat the sex trafficking of children in Los Angeles.

Department of Mental Health Responds to CSEC

- Over 200 LACDMH providers have been trained on "CSEC 101," and on choice treatment interventions for working with CSEC youth.
- Over 75 provider agencies have been trained in one or more Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) addressing specific mental health symptoms, trauma or emotional issues presented by the youth.
- Within the juvenile justice system, CSEC-trained mental health clinicians partner with LA County Probation staff to provide workshops, awareness and psychoeducational programming for CSEC-identified youth detained in juvenile hall.

Rethinking the Perception of Victims

An important part of taking action against CSEC is reframing perceptions about its victims and fighting the stigma that surrounds this issue. For example, children and youth who have been prostituted and exploited are often regarded as "teen prostitutes" by the public and authorities with whom they come in contact.

Here are some facts:

- Many victims of sex trafficking have been molested, raped and/or sexually assaulted by a family member or close family friend. 95% of "teen prostitutes" were victims of earlier childhood sexual abuse.
- · Given the few choices some youth have, when he/she sells sex at the hands of an exploitative adult, it is largely a means of survival.
- "Teen prostitutes" are often confused as offenders vs. victims by law enforcement. However, because of their emotional and physical immaturity, legal standards exist to protect them from exploitative adults.

Resources

LA Metro Taskforce: 800-655-4095

National Human Trafficking Hotline: 888-373-7888

California Human Trafficking Legislation: https://oag.ca.gov/human-trafficking/legislation

For more information on CSEC, additional resources, please visit our Transition Age Youth website at http://dmh. lacounty.gov/wps/portal/dmh/our_services/tay. Contact CSECinfo@dmh.lacounty.gov regarding information on the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health efforts or to become involved.

(http://www.prevent-abuse-now.com/stats)

State of California, Department of Justice: Office of the Attorney General—http://oag.ca.gov/human-trafficking

Albanese, J. (2007). U.S. Department of Justice (OJJDP), National Institute of Justice Special Report, December 2007, "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: What do we know and what do we do about it?"— https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/215733.pdf

Shared Hope International. (2009). The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America's Prostituted Children.

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